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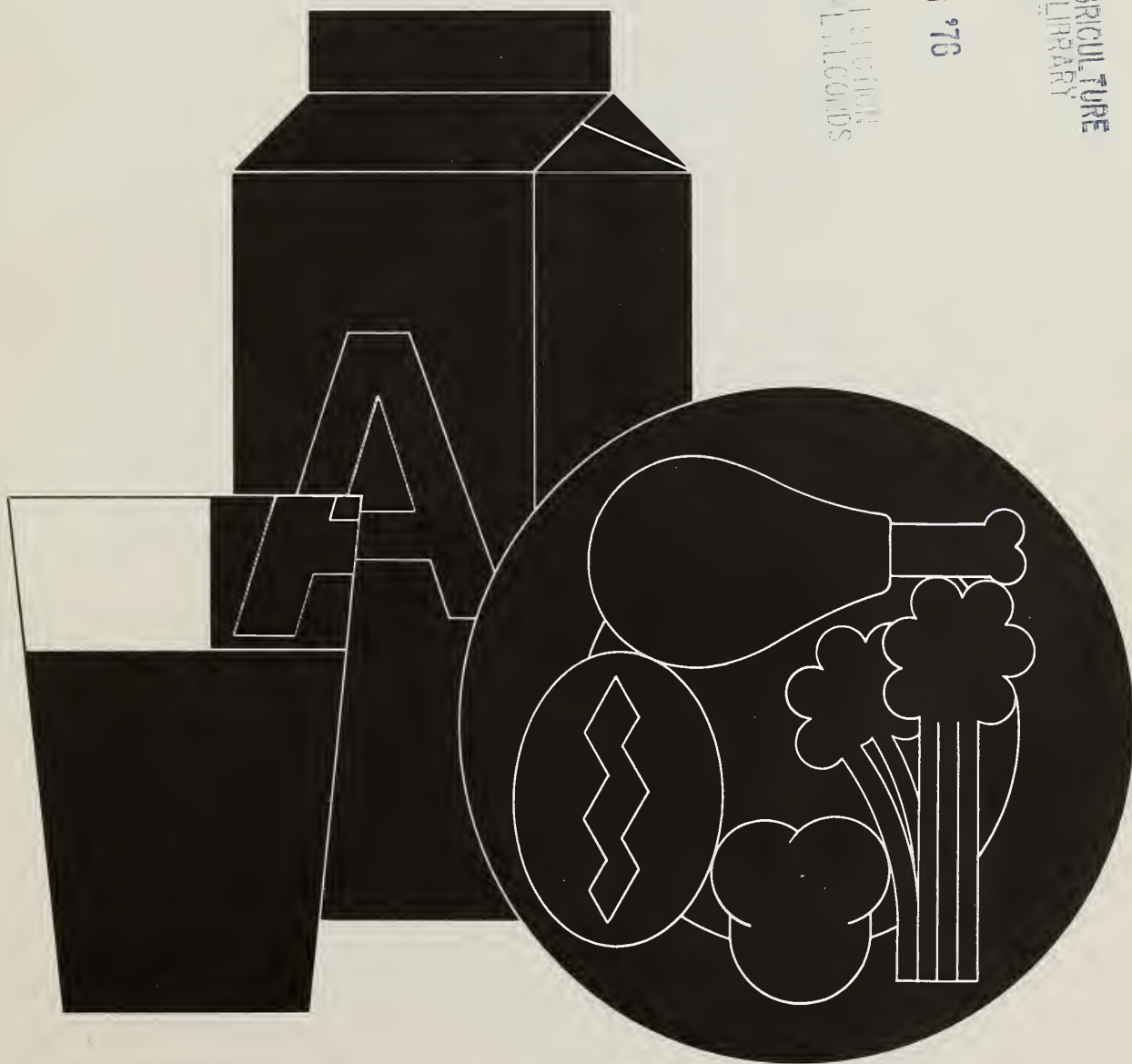
United States
Department of Agriculture

Food and
Nutrition Service

PA 1149
Revised July 1976

Free and Reduced Price Meal and Free Milk Policy Handbook

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This publication, "The Free and Reduced Price Meal and Free Milk Policy Handbook," Program Aid No. 1149, replaces "The Free and Reduced Price Handbook," FNS-106, issued July 1974.

Introduction

To carry out the Congressional intent that milk and nutritious meals be available to every school child regardless of the family's ability to pay, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has established regu-

lations which must be observed in all schools that participate in the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, or Special Milk Programs or that receive commodities. These provisions are contained

in the Code of Federal Regulations, Title 7, Part 245, "Determining Eligibility for Free and Reduced Price Meals and Free Milk."

These regulations outline specific responsibilities for all levels of administration:

1. By June 1 of each year the Secretary of Agriculture announces minimum and maximum family-size and income guidelines to be used in determining eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk.

2. By July 1 of each year the State Agencies and Food and Nutrition Service Regional Offices prescribe, within the Secretary's guidelines, family-size and income standards for

free and reduced price meals and free milk in their States. In addition, they must issue detailed instructions to the school food authorities on developing free and reduced price policies. Often these instructions are a prototype policy which school food authorities may use in entirety.

3. Before the opening of school, each local school food authority must develop a free and reduced price policy, including family-size and income eligibility criteria which conform with State or Regional Office standards. This policy

must be used in all schools under its administration participating in the program.

Each year each school food authority must develop a policy (or amend the previous one) and submit it to the State Agency or FNS Regional Office for approval. Reimbursement shall be suspended for any meals or milk served after October 15 of any year, and no USDA commodities may be used after that date, until the school food authority's free and reduced price policy has been approved by the State or FNS Regional Office.

This handbook has been prepared as an aid in developing and implementing free and reduced price policies. It contains samples of a policy, a letter to parents, an appli-

cation, a public release, and collection procedures as well as a summary of USDA's administrative decisions affecting free and reduced price policies. The addendum contains a letter to parents and application in Spanish.

All programs of the U.S. Department of Agriculture are available to everyone without regard to race, creed, color, national origin, or political belief.

Administrative Guidance

Since Public Law 91-248 was enacted, many significant questions have come up regarding program administration and determination of eligibility. The following section answers some of these

questions. School food authorities are encouraged to reproduce this section for local school officials who determine eligibility.



1
Q: When should I send applications and letters to parents concerning free and reduced price meals and free milk?

A: Applications and letters should be sent to parents of all school children within the first week of school. Action should be taken within 10 working days on all applications returned to the school.

2.
Q: Can I serve free and reduced price meals and free milk during the first week of school before applications have been approved?

A: During the opening week of school, you should serve free and reduced price meals and free milk to children from families with approved applications on file from the previous school year.

3.
Q: Exactly how do I determine who is eligible for free or reduced price meals and free milk?

A: Note the family's income and the family's size on the child's completed application form. (For a definition of "income" see question 4). If the family's income and family's size fall within your local criteria, the child is eligible for free or reduced price meals and free milk.

If the family's income is too high to fall within the local criteria, check the application to see if the family has noted any extra expenses because of special hardship conditions. (For a definition of "special hardship conditions," see question five.) If the income after this deduction for hardships falls within your criteria, the child is eligible for free or reduced price meals and free milk.

4.
Q: What is to be reported as income on the family's application form?

A: Income means money earned before deductions for income taxes, employee's social security taxes, insurance premiums, bonds, etc.

Income includes the following: (1) monetary compensation for services, including wages, salary, commission or fees, (2) net income from self-employed farmers and self-employed businessmen (see question seven), (3) social security, (4) dividends or interests on savings or bonds, (5) income from estates or trust, (6) net rental income, (7) public assistance or welfare payments, (8) unemployment compensations, (9) government civilian employee or military retirement or pensions, (10) veterans' payments, (11) private pensions or annuities, (12) alimony or child support payments, (13) regular contributions from persons not living in the household, (14) net royalties, and (15) other cash income. Other cash income would include cash amounts received or withdrawn from any source including savings, investments, trust accounts, and other resources, which would be available to pay the price of a child's meal.

In determining eligibility for free or reduced price meals or free milk, school food authorities may use either the family's income during the past 12 months or the family's current rate of income, whichever is the better indicator of the family's need.

Income as defined above is a gross figure and should be reported on the application form in the income blank. This figure should *not* contain adjustments for special hardship conditions as defined in question five.

Income should not include money received by volunteers for services performed under the National Older Americans Volunteer Program as noted in the 1973 amendments to the Older Americans Act of 1965.

5.
Q: What are special hardship conditions?

A: The money a family spends because of a special hardship (which could not have reasonably been anticipated or controlled) should be entered on the application form. You should then subtract the expense from the family's total income noted on the form. If the family's income, after this deduction, falls within your income criteria, the family's children are eligible for free and reduced price benefits.

Special hardship conditions are:

- (1) unusually high medical costs
- (2) shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of the family's income (see question six)
- (3) special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child, and
- (4) disaster or casualty losses.

6.
Q: How do I calculate shelter costs?

A: The total amount of money a family spends on shelter should be entered on the application form. Shelter costs over 30 percent of the family's income can be deducted from the income when you determine eligibility. First figure what 30 percent of the family's income is. For instance, the family's monthly income is \$400. Thirty percent of \$400 is \$120. Any money the family spends on shelter over \$120 a month may be deducted from the family income.

7.
Q: How do I determine net income for self-employed farmers or businessmen?

A: *Net income for self-employed farmers* is figured by subtracting the farmer's operating expenses from his gross receipts. (A farmer is anyone who operates a farm on his own account, as an owner, renter or sharecropper.)

A farmer's *operating expenses* include cost of feed, fertilizer, seed and other farming supplies, cash wages paid to farmhands, depreciation charges, cash rent, interest on farm mortgages, farm building repairs, farm taxes (but not State and Federal income taxes).

Gross receipts include the value of all products sold, government crop loans, money received from the rental of farm equipment to others, and incidental receipts from the sale of wood, sand, gravel, etc.

The value of fuel, food or other farm products used for family living is not included as part of net income.

Net income for self-employed businessmen is also figured by subtracting their business expenses from their gross receipts. ("Business" refers to a professional enterprise or partnership.)

Expenses include cost of goods purchased, rent, heat, light, power, depreciation charges, wages and salaries paid, business taxes (not personal income taxes), etc.

Gross receipts include the total value of goods sold or services rendered by the business.

The value of saleable merchandise consumed by the proprietors of retail stores is not included as part of net income.

In both cases, the key phrase is "subtract operating expenses from gross receipts." This leaves the amount of money that is available for living expenses. The expenses attributed to special hardship conditions would be subtracted from the income available for living expenses—not the gross receipts.

8.
Q: What do I do if a family does not provide information on family size and income on the application form?

A: You must have the family's size and income in order to determine eligibility. You may, therefore, contact the family either by phone or in writing to get that specific information. You should document the details of your contact and the information you receive on the family's application.

9.

Q: What do I do if a family does not sign its application form?

A: Return it to the family. The application form must be signed by an adult member of the family certifying that the information on the application is true and correct before a decision can be made about eligibility.

10.

Q: What is considered a "family" for the purpose of determining family size and income?

A: "Family" means a group of related or nonrelated individuals, who are not residents of an institution or a boarding house, but who are living as one economic group. Students who are temporarily away at school should be counted as members of the family.

11.

Q: What should I do if a parent advises me that their family size or income has changed after their original application has been filed?

A: You should provide the family with a new application form and request that the parent reapply. Applications may be submitted at any time during the school year.

12.

Q: What do I do if a family suffers a temporary loss of income?

A: If the family's current rate of income falls within your eligibility criteria, you may grant temporary approval for free and reduced price meals

or free milk to their children. School officials should base eligibility on the family's current rate of income rather than on the family's annual income. However, the application must be completed as usual.

When the temporary condition has been alleviated, families approved under this provision should be informed that the conditional approval will end within a specific time (10 days for instance) and that those wishing continued assistance may apply for a continued eligibility by submitting a new application.

13.

Q: Are military benefits included as part of a family's income?

A: All cash income or payments a family receives must be considered as income. However, the value of benefits other than cash, like military base housing, is not considered as income.

14.

Q: What do I do when a father is serving in the military overseas?

A: In determining eligibility, the serviceman overseas is not counted as a family member but the money he sends to his family is included in the family's income.

15.

Q: Can I certify a child to be eligible for free or reduced priced meals and free milk if the child's parents have not sent in an application but I know the family is needy?

A: If, after sending applications and letters to parents, you have not received an application from a needy child's family, you may go to another source for information on the family's size and income.

You should note the source of this information, complete and file an application, and

make a decision on the child's eligibility.

If the child has been declared eligible for the program, you should notify the family.

This does not mean, however, that eligibility determinations or certification can be made by categories or groups of children. Specific income and family size data must be obtained for each child to determine eligibility.

16.

Q: Does a family's eligibility for assistance, such as food stamps or public assistance payments, qualify that family for free or reduced priced meals and free milk for its children?

A: No. Eligibility for free or reduced price meals and free milk must be based solely upon family size and income after adjustments for special hardships described in question five.

17.

Q: What can I do if I have reason to believe a family's application contains incorrect or false information?

A: If the information on the application is complete, you must determine the child's eligibility based solely on that information and extend the appropriate benefits to that child even if you believe the information is false.

Once an application is approved, school officials may, for cause, seek verification of the information. The verification process may include an informal conference with the parents to discuss the application. However, such a conference may not in any way prejudice or diminish the right to a formal hearing under the fair hearing procedure set forth in the school's free and reduced price policy. The child, however, must continue to receive free and reduced price meals and free milk pending the outcome of the challenge.

18.

Q: How do I determine if a foster child is eligible for free or reduced price meals and free milk?

A: In cases where the welfare agency is legally responsible for the child and the foster home is, in fact, an extension of the welfare agency, the foster child is considered a one-member family. Welfare agency payments for the care of that foster child are considered the income of that one-member family. Therefore, if the foster child's annual income is not above the income guidelines prescribed by the local school food authority for one-member family eligibility for free or reduced price meals or free milk, the foster child is entitled to those benefits.

In cases where the welfare agency has placed a child in a permanent home and/or subsidizes the child's adoption, the child is considered a member of the household in which he resides. The family size and total income of the family determine the child's eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk.

When a family indicates on their application that they have a foster child you should seek the assistance of the family in determining in which of the above two categories their foster child would be and determine eligibility. This determination should be documented on the application form by the school official.

19.

Q: What do I do about granting free and reduced price meals and free milk to institutionalized children?

A: When a child has a family, the eligibility of that child is based on his family size and income. When there is no family, the child is considered a one-member family. Any money the child earns is

considered income and should be used in determining eligibility.

20.

Q: Are there any restrictions on disciplining free and reduced price meal or free milk recipients?

A: Denying free or reduced price meals to children certified as eligible for such meals is prohibited as disciplinary action (FNS Instruction 791-1). Section 9 of the National School Lunch Act states that "... any child who is a member of a household which has an annual income not above the applicable family size income level set forth in the income poverty guidelines shall be served meals free or at a reduced cost." Public Law 92-32 mandates the same requirement for serving free or reduced price breakfasts.

When considering disciplinary action against any child certified as eligible for a free or reduced price meal or free milk, make sure that such action does not conflict with the mandate of the National School Lunch Act (as amended) and the Child Nutrition Act of 1966 (as amended) with respect to providing all needy children with a free or reduced price meal and free milk.

21.

Q: Are there any restrictions against free or reduced price recipients working in the lunchroom?

A: Regulations state that recipients of free and reduced price meals and free milk shall not be required to work for those benefits. However, they are not prohibited from voluntarily working in the lunchroom.

Some schools employ student helpers in the cafeteria for monetary or other compensation. In these cases, parents of all workers should be informed in writing that

their children have volunteered to work. The letter should state that if the child has been certified as eligible for free or reduced price meals and free milk, his or her continued eligibility is in no way dependent upon working. In addition, the letter should not be a part of or attached to the free and reduced price letter to parents, application, or notice of approval or denial.

22.

Q: What should I charge for a reduced price meal?

A: You cannot charge more than 20 cents for lunch or 10 cents for breakfast and the reduced price must be less than the full price of lunch or breakfast.

In addition, charges for reduced price meals in high schools and grade schools under one school food authority must be the same to ensure that all children from the same family receive the same benefits. However, the charge for a full price meal may be more in high schools than grade schools.

23.

Q: If I offer a choice of Type A lunches at different prices, must this same option be available to free and reduced price meal recipients?

A: Yes. In an effort to increase participation, schools may offer students a choice of Type A lunches. Occasionally, one lunch may be more expensive because of a special meal item. However, free and reduced price recipients must be able to choose either meal with no additional charge.

24.

Q: If a child is eligible for reduced price meals, is he also eligible for free milk?

A: No. Children are only eligible for free milk if they

have been declared eligible for free meals. Children eligible for reduced price meals are *not* eligible for free milk.

25.

Q: Am I required to offer both free and reduced price meals?

A: Yes. Under the National School Lunch and Breakfast Programs, schools must make both free and reduced price meals available to those children who qualify for such meals.

26.

Q: When mid-year changes occur in eligibility criteria or in the operation of the program which result in a change in potential recipients, what action must a school take?

A: Under the direction of the local school food authority, a school must send the eligibility criteria to parents in a letter along with an application form. The applications must be reviewed and eligibility determined on the basis of the new criteria.

27.

Q: Must schools have a separate policy statement for the Special Milk Program?

A: Not always. The same policy statement can be used for free and reduced price meals and free milk. If the school participates only in the Special Milk Program and the school food authority doesn't have an approved statement for free and reduced price meals, a separate free milk policy must be approved.

28.

Q: How much milk must be offered to children eligible for free milk under the Special Milk Program?

A: All schools in the Special Milk Program are required to make available on request one half pint of free milk to eligible children. Schools participating only in the Special Milk Program (and without

food service) may also serve a second half pint of free milk on request to eligible children at the option of local school food authority.

Schools participating in the National School Lunch and/or Breakfast Programs are only required to offer one half pint of milk to children with their meals. However, children eligible for free milk may also receive a second half pint of free milk on request.

Schools must inform all eligible children—either individually or through the school newspaper, public address announcements or other media—that free milk is available on request.

Prototype Policy

Each local school food authority must submit a free and reduced price policy to the State Agency or FNS Regional Office for approval prior to the opening of school. This section contains a sample

of such a policy. Local school food authorities receive specific directions on the development and policy approval process from the State Agency or FNSRO, where applicable.



The (name of school food authority) has agreed to participate in the (choose whichever are applicable: National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, Special Milk Program, and/or to receive commodities donated by USDA) and accepts responsibility for providing (choose whichever are applicable: free and reduced price meals, free milk) to eligible children in the schools under its jurisdiction.

The school food authority assures the (choose whichever is applicable: State Department of Education or Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office) that the school system will uniformly implement the following policy to determine children's eligibility for free and reduced price meals in all National School Lunch Program, School Breakfast Program, and commodity-only schools under its jurisdiction and to determine children's eligibility for free milk in all Special Milk Program schools under its jurisdiction. In fulfilling its responsibilities the school food authority:

A.
Agrees to serve milk and meals free to children from families whose income is at or below that listed in Attachment A.

B.
Agrees to serve meals at a reduced price to children from families whose income falls between the free meal scale and 195 percent of the Secretary's poverty guidelines listed in Attachment A.

C.
Agrees to provide these benefits to any child whose family's income falls within the criteria in Attachment A after deductions are made for the following special hardship conditions which could not reasonably be anticipated or controlled by the household: unusually high medical ex-

penses, shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of reported income, special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child, and disaster or casualty losses. In addition, agrees to provide these benefits to children from families who are experiencing strikes, layoffs and unemployment which cause the family income to fall within the criteria set forth in Attachment A.

D.
Agrees that there will be no physical segregation of, nor any other discrimination against, any child because of his inability to pay the full price of the meal or milk. The names of the children eligible to receive free or reduced price meals and free milk shall not be published, posted or announced in any manner and there shall be no overt identification of any such children by use of special tokens or tickets or any other means. Further assurance is given that children eligible for free or reduced price meals or free milk shall not be required to:

1. Work for their meals or milk.
2. Use a separate lunchroom.
3. Go through a separate serving line.
4. Enter the lunchroom through a separate entrance.
5. Eat meals or drink milk at a different time.
6. Eat a meal different from the one sold to children paying the full price or drink milk different from that sold to children paying the full price.

E.
Agrees that in the operation of child nutrition programs, no child shall be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, or national origin.

F.
Agrees to establish and use a fair hearing procedure for parents' appeals of the

school's decisions on applications and for school officials' challenges to the correctness of information contained in an application or to the continued eligibility of any child for free or reduced price meals or free milk. During the appeal and hearing the child will continue to receive free or reduced price meals or free milk. A record of all such appeals and challenges and their dispositions shall be retained for 3 years.

Prior to initiating the hearing procedures, the parent or local school official may request a conference to provide an opportunity for the parent and school official to discuss the situation, present information, and obtain an explanation of data submitted in the application and decisions rendered. Such a conference shall not in any way prejudice or diminish the right to a fair hearing.

The hearing procedure shall provide the following:

1. A publicly-announced, simple method for making an oral or written request for a hearing.
2. An opportunity to be assisted or represented by an attorney or other person.
3. An opportunity to examine, prior to and during the hearing, the documents and records presented to support the decision under appeal.
4. Reasonable promptness and convenience in scheduling a hearing and adequate notice as to the time and place of the hearing.
5. An opportunity to present oral or documentary evidence and arguments supporting a position without undue interference.
6. An opportunity to question or refute any testimony or other evidence and to confront and cross-examine any adverse witnesses.
7. That the hearing be conducted and the decision made by a hearing official who did not participate in the decision

under appeal or in any previous conference.

8. That the decision of the hearing official be based on the oral and documentary evidence presented at the hearing and made a part of the hearing record.

9. That the parties concerned and any designated representative thereof be notified in writing of the decision of the hearing official.

10. That for each hearing a written record be prepared, including the decision under appeal, any documentary evidence and a summary of any oral testimony presented at the hearing, the decision of the hearing official and the reasons therefor, and a copy of the notification to the parties concerned of the hearing official's decision.

11. That such written record be preserved for a period of 3 years and shall be available for examination by the parties concerned or their representatives at any reasonable time and place during such period.

G.
Agrees to designate (*name and title*) to review applications and make determinations of eligibility. This official will use the criteria outlined in this policy to determine which individual children are eligible for free or reduced price meals and free milk.

H.
Agrees to develop and send to each child's parent or guardian a letter as outlined herein, including an application form for free or reduced price meals and free milk at the beginning of each school year and whenever there is a change in eligibility criteria.

Parents will be requested to complete the application and return it to the determining official (named in G) for review. Such applications and documentation of action taken will be maintained for 3 years

after the end of the school year to which they pertain.

Applications may be filed at any time during the year. Any parent enrolling a child in a school for the first time, at any time during the year, shall be supplied with such documents. If a child transfers from one school to another under the jurisdiction of the same school food authority, his eligibility for a free or reduced price meal and free milk will be transferred to and honored by the receiving school.

All children from a family will receive the same benefits. Within ten working days of the receipt of applications, parents or guardians will be notified individually of the acceptance or denial of their applications. Children will be served meals and milk immediately upon the establishment of their eligibility.

When an application is rejected, parents or guardians will be informed of the reason for denial and the hearing procedure. The designated hearing official is (*name, title, and address*).

Note: (This person must be someone not involved in the original eligibility determination. It is suggested that he hold a position superior to that of the determining official.)

I.
Agrees to submit a public release containing the same information outlined in the parent letter to the news media, local employment offices and major employers contemplating large layoffs.

J.
Agrees to establish a procedure to collect from children who pay for their meals and milk and to account for the number of free, reduced price, and full price meals served and the number of half pints of free and full price milk served. The procedure described in Attachment D will be used so that no other child

in the school will consciously be made aware by such procedure of the identify of the children receiving reduced price meals or free milk and meals.

K.
Agree to submit to the (*choose whichever is applicable: State Department of Education or Food and Nutrition Service Regional Office*) any alterations, public announcements, etc., prior to implementation. Such changes will be effective only upon approval. All changes in eligibility criteria must be publicly announced in the same manner used at the beginning of the school year.

Attachments:

The following attachments are adopted with and considered part of this policy:

Attachment A
Eligibility criteria for free and reduced price meals and free milk

Attachment B
Parent letter and application

Attachment C
Public release

Attachment D
Collection procedure

Approved by:

Signature of local school official

Date

Signature of State Director or
FNSRO Representative

Date



These are the income scales used by (*school food authority*) to determine eligibility for free and reduced price meals and free milk:

Family size	Eligibility scale for free meals and free milk	Eligibility scale for reduced price meals
1		
2		
3		
4		
5		
6		
7		
8		
9		
10		
11		
12		
Each additional family member		

**Sample
Parent Letter
for Lunch,
Breakfast and Milk**

*Delete references to
meals or milk where
not applicable.*

Attachment B

This is the parent letter and application form exactly as we will send it out on _____
for the _____ school year. (date) (date)

Dear Parent or Guardian:

The _____ School serves nutritious meals every school day.
Students may buy lunch for _____ cents, breakfast for _____ cents, and extra milk for _____ cents.

Children from families whose income is at or below the levels shown on the attached scale are eligible for free milk and for meals free or at a reduced price of _____ cents for lunch and _____ cents for breakfast. If your income is greater than that shown but you have unusually high medical bills, shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of your income, special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child, or disaster or casualty losses, your children may still be eligible.

To apply at any time during the year for free or reduced price meals and free milk for your children, complete the attached application and return it to the school. Within _____ days of receiving your application, the school will let you know whether or not your children are eligible. If you do not agree with the school's decision, you may wish to discuss it with the school. If you wish to review the decision further, you have a right to a fair hearing. This can be done by calling or writing

name	address	phone
------	---------	-------

In certain cases foster children are also eligible for these benefits. If you have foster children living with you and wish to apply for such meals and milk for them, please notify us or indicate it on the application.

All children are treated the same regardless of ability to pay. In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, or national origin.

If there is a change in your family's income due to reasons such as unemployment or if there is a change in your family size, please contact us. This change may make your children eligible for reduced priced meals, or for additional benefits such as free meals and milk.

If we can be of any further assistance, please contact us.

Sincerely,

Name

Title

Date

**Sample
Application for Lunch,
Breakfast and Milk**

*Delete references to
meals or milk where
not applicable*

Attachment B

Parents:

To apply for free or reduced price meals and free milk for your children, fill out this form and return it to the school office.

**Names and grades
of children
for whom application
is made:**

Names: _____

Schools: _____

Grades: _____

**Name and address
of parent or guardian:**

Name _____

Address _____

Total number in family: _____

**Total family income
before deductions.**

Include wages of all working members, welfare payments, pensions, social security, and all other income. Fill in *one*:

If your gross family income exceeds the amount indicated in the attached family income

Hardship and
Estimated dollar value:

Yearly _____

Monthly _____

Weekly _____

scale and you wish to apply under any of the special hardship conditions cited in the attached letter, please complete

- ☐ High medical bills
☐ Disaster or casualty losses
☐ Shelter cost
☐ Special educational expense for children

Every 2 weeks _____

Other _____

Specify: _____

the application form and also describe the nature of your hardship here:

\$ _____

\$ _____

\$ _____

\$ _____

In certain cases foster children are eligible for free or reduced price meals and free milk regardless of your family

income. If you have foster children living with you and wish to apply for such meals and milk for them, ☐ please check here.

The school may wish to contact you for more information about your foster child to determine eligibility.

I hereby certify that all of the above information is true and correct. I understand that this information is being given in

Signature of adult family member _____

connection with the receipt of Federal funds; that school officials may, for cause, verify information; and that

deliberate misrepresentation may subject me to prosecution under applicable State and Federal criminal statutes.

Date _____

For School Use Only

☐ Approved Free

☐ Approved Reduced

☐ Denied

Reason for denial _____

Date _____

Approving Official _____

Your application for free and reduced price meals and free milk for your children has been:

☐ Approved for free meals and free milk

☐ Approved for reduced price meals at _____ cents for lunch _____ cents for breakfast

☐ Denied for the following reason(s): _____

Approving Official: _____

School Food Authority: _____

If you do not agree with the decision you may discuss it with the school. You may appeal the decision by calling or writing names and titles at address and phone _____

This is the public release that we will send to (names of news media outlets and major employers contemplating layoffs) on _____.

(Local school food authority) today announced its policy for (free and reduced price meals, free milk) for children unable to pay the full price of meal and milk served under the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, and Special Milk Programs.

Local school officials have adopted the following family size income criteria for determining eligibility: (insert scales)

Children from families whose income is at or below the levels shown are eligible for (free or reduced price meals or free milk). In addition, families not meeting these criteria but with other unusual expenses due to unusually high medical expenses, shelter costs in excess of 30 percent of income, special education expenses due to the mental or physical condition of a child, and disaster or casualty losses are urged to apply.

Application forms are being sent to all homes in a letter to parents. Additional copies are available at the principal's office in each school. The information provided on the application is confidential and will be used only for the purpose of determining eligibility. Applications may be submitted at any time during the year.

In certain cases foster children are also eligible for these benefits. If a family has foster children living with them and wishes to apply for such meals and milk for them, it should contact the school.

Under the provisions of the policy (title of determining official) will review applications and determine eligibility. If a parent is dissatisfied with the ruling of the official, he may wish to discuss the decision with the determining official on an informal basis.

If he wishes to make a formal appeal, he may make a request either orally or in writing to (name, address, phone of the hearing official) for a hearing to appeal the decision. The policy contains an outline of the hearing procedure.

If a family member becomes unemployed or if family size changes, the family should contact the school to file a new application. Such changes may make the children of the family eligible for reduced price meals, or for additional benefits such as free meals and milk if the family income falls at or below the levels shown above.

In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, or national origin.

Each school and the office of the (central office) has a copy of the complete policy which may be reviewed by any interested party.

_____ School(s) use(s) the following collection procedure:

(If more than one system of collection is used, explain them all and indicate which schools use which system. Describe in detail, including the method used to distribute

tokens, tickets, etc.; the method used to collect children's payments—where, when, how; and the method used to account for full price, free, and reduced price meals

and free and full price milk each day. If tokens or tickets are used, attach a free, a reduced price, and a full price ticket or token.)

**Sample
Collection
Procedures**

In collecting payments for meals and milk and in distributing tickets, tokens, etc., school officials must ensure that there is no overt identification of recipients of free or reduced price meals and free milk. Care must be taken to prevent such identification at the time the ticket or token is issued as well as in the serving line.

Any collection system should have a built-in accounting system to record the numbers of full price, reduced price, and free meals and the quantities of full price and free milk served daily. Keeping these counts is a regulatory requirement.

The following collection methods have been effectively employed across the nation. They can be used equally well in the National School Lunch, School Breakfast, and Special Milk Programs. To prevent overt identification of recipients and to provide adequate accountability for free milk, a separate ticket or token system for paid and free milk may be necessary. Some of them require ticket or token coding. Various methods for coding are discussed below.

☐ Before school, children can buy tickets at the cafeteria manager's office but they

do not receive the tickets. The cafeteria manager sends the purchased tickets as well as tickets for free meals and milk recipients to the classroom each day. The teacher distributes the tickets just before meal time. The tickets are coded for accounting purposes.

☐ Students pay for their meals in the office. A check-off list, including the names of all children eating (full price, reduced price, and free) is then prepared and sent to the cafeteria. A cashier familiar with the student body checks off names as children pass through the line. At the end of the meal service the list is returned to the office for accounting purposes. This method will only work in a relatively small school in which one person is familiar with the entire student body.

☐ The homeroom teacher provides each child with an envelope for daily, weekly, or monthly payments. Pupils return the envelopes with payment if paying full or reduced price, or empty if free. The envelopes are collected in the school office and coded tickets are issued to every participating student.

☐ Parents pay in advance by the month. Each teacher receives a list of those chil-

dren who have paid. Those children who receive free meals or milk are marked paid, so no one but the bookkeeper knows which children receive a free meal or milk. Teachers keep daily records of each child served.

☐ Meal payments are collected in the school secretary's office. Payments can be made by children or parents on a daily, weekly, or monthly basis. The secretary records payments and knows which children qualify for free meals or free milk. Identical tickets labeled only with the children's names are distributed in the classrooms by the secretary. Since parents may make payments, even children who receive free meals or milk may not know whether their meals or milk are free, reduced price or full price.

☐ Parents are billed monthly for full price or reduced price meals their children are served. All payments are mailed in so that no money is collected in classrooms. All participating students receive a monthly ticket which is punched each time the student eats. At the end of the month the tickets are collected and a clerk calculates the amount to be billed.

Coding Methods

☐ *Number coding.* Free meal or milk tickets may all have a four digit number, reduced price tickets have a five digit number, and full price tickets have a six digit number.

☐ *Number coding by series.* Numbers 1 through 1,999 may be free meal or milk tickets,

numbers 2 000 through 3,999 may be reduced price tickets, and numbers 4,000 through 5,999 may be full price tickets.

☐ *Names.* Tickets may have the child's name on them and can later be compared to a checklist.

☐ *Date stamp.* Tickets may

have the date stamped on them in different spots. For instance, tickets with the date stamped in the top third may be full price, tickets stamped in the middle third are free, and tickets stamped on the bottom are reduced price.

**Free and
Reduced Price
Policy
Checklist**

Notes:

Free and Reduced Price Policy Checklist

If you develop your own policy, letter to parents, public release, or application, you should check it against this list to ensure that it contains all the items required.

Policy Statement Must Contain:

- ☐ Reference to all programs in which you participate—breakfast, lunch, milk.
- ☐ Reference to free and reduced price meals.
- ☐ Title of official designated to make the eligibility determinations.
- ☐ Family size and income criteria to determine eligibility, including the four specified hardship provisions and the foster children provision.
- ☐ Application procedure.
- ☐ Description of collection procedure(s).
- ☐ Nondiscrimination assurances.
- ☐ Assurance that application will be accepted at any time during the school year.
- ☐ Assurance that free and reduced price meal and free milk recipients may transfer eligibility within school district.
- ☐ Assurance that all children in the same family will receive the same benefits.
- ☐ Statement that policy will be announced by means of a letter to parents.
- ☐ Assurance that the same information outlined in the parent letter will be submitted to the informational media.
- ☐ Assurance that if lunch, breakfast, and milk are served, eligibility criteria are the same.
- ☐ Complete hearing procedure.
- ☐ Assurance that recipients of free and reduced price meals and free milk will continue to receive benefits during the time an appeal is pending.

- ☐ Copy of public release.
- ☐ Copy of application.
- ☐ Copy of letter to parents.
- ☐ Copy of family-size income scale.
- ☐ Copy of collection procedure(s).

The Letter to Parents Must:

- ☐ Contain complete eligibility criteria, including the four specified hardship conditions and statement of possible eligibility of foster children.
- ☐ Indicate that an application is included.
- ☐ Provide instructions for submitting an application.
- ☐ Tell how to appeal (oral/written).
- ☐ Tell where to appeal.
- ☐ Give the reduced price for lunch and for breakfast.
- ☐ Contain the statement: "In the operation of child feeding programs, no child will be discriminated against because of race, sex, color, or national origin."
- ☐ Contain an unemployment reference.

Application Form Must:

- ☐ Be clear and simple and request only information required to determine eligibility: number in family, family income, certification of true and accurate information (with penalty statement for deliberate misrepresentation), and signature of adult family member.
- ☐ Tell where to submit application.
- ☐ Include the statement: "In certain cases foster children are eligible for free or reduced price meals and free milk regardless of family income. If you have foster children living with you and wish to apply for such meals for them, please contact us."

- ☐ Include the statement: "If your gross family income exceeds the amount indicated in the family income scale as shown and you wish to apply for free or reduced price meals and free milk for your children under any of the special hardship conditions cited in the letter, please complete this application form and also describe the nature of your hardship."

Public Release Must Contain:

- ☐ Eligibility criteria, including the four specified hardship conditions and the statement of possible eligibility of foster children.
- ☐ Instructions for obtaining applications.
- ☐ Instructions for appeal (oral/written).
- ☐ Nondiscrimination statement.
- ☐ Unemployment reference.

Collection Procedure(s) Must:

- ☐ Prevent overt identification of children receiving free or reduced price meals and free milk at the time meal is served.
- ☐ Prevent overt identification of children receiving free or reduced price meals and free milk at the time the medium of exchange (ticket, token, etc.) is obtained.



Addendum

Sample Parent Letter for Lunch, Breakfast, and Milk — Spanish

If you serve an area with high concentrations of parents who do not speak English,

you should develop the letters to parents and applications in the language of the people.

This section contains the parent letter and application in Spanish.

Queridos Padres:

La escuela Name of School sirve comidas alimenticias diariamente durante los días escolares. Los estudiantes pueden comprar el almuerzo por price of lunch centavos, el desayuno por price of breakfast centavos, y leche adicional por price of milk centavos.

Los niños de familias cuyos ingresos son al nivel o bajo del nivel según la escala que le incluimos, califican para obtener leche gratis y comidas gratis o a precio reducido a u reduced price for lunch centavos por el almuerzo y a reduced price for breakfast centavos por el desayuno. Si sus ingresos son mayores que lo que se indica, aún sus hijos pueden ser elegibles bajo las siguientes circunstancias: si tienen cuentas médicas en exceso, gastos de domicilio que exceden treinta por ciento de sus ingresos, gastos en educación especializada para su hijo por causa de una incapacidad física o mental, y pérdidas accidentales o a consecuencia de desastres.

Para aplicar en cualquier tiempo durante el año para leche gratis y comidas gratis o a precio reducido para sus hijos, hagan el favor de completar la aplicación adjunta y remitirla a la escuela. La escuela se tomará number of days to approve application días en contestarle al respecto informándoles si sus hijos son elegibles. Si no aceptan la decisión, tienen el derecho de solicitar una audiencia. En tal caso, sirvase escribir al Sr (a) name and address of hearing official o llamen al teléfono telephone number.

También hay casos en que niños al cuidado de una familia, califican para estos beneficios. Si ustedes tienen tales niños en su residencia y desean que estos niños participen en las comidas y la leche hagan el favor de mencionarlo en la aplicación.

A todos los niños se les trata igual, no importa si pagan o no. En los programas de alimentación escolar los niños no serán discriminados a causa de raza, sexo, color, u origen de nacionalidad.

Tengan la bondad de notificarnos en caso de algún cambio en sus ingresos debido a desempleo o cambios en el tamaño de la familia. Tales cambios pueden favorecer a sus hijos en elegibilidad para leche gratis, comidas gratis o a precio reducido.

Favor de comunicarse con nosotros si le podemos servir con más ayuda.

Sinceramente,

Name _____

Title _____

Fecha _____

Telefono _____

**Sample
Application for
Lunch, Breakfast, and
Milk — Spanish**

*Delete references to
meals, or milk where
not applicable*

Padres:

Llenen este modelo para aplicar para leche gratis y comidas gratis o a precios reducidos para sus niños y devuelvanlo a la oficina de la escuela.

**Nombre y grado
de los niños
para quien la
aplicacion se hace;**

Nombre:

Escuela:

Grado:

**Nombre y dirección
de padres o guardiánes:**

Nombres

Dirección

**Número de miembros en la
familia:**

**Total de ingresos
antes de deducciones:**

Incluya sueldos de todos los
miembros de la familia que

trabajan, pagos de benefi-
cencia, pensiones, seguro

social, y toda entrada de
dinero. Llenen uno solamente:

Annual

Semanal

Otro

Mensual

Cada dos semanas

Especifique

Si sus ingresos exceden la
cantidad indicada en la escala
adjunta y ustedes desean

aplicar bajo una de las condi-
ciones especiales nombra-
das anteriormente en la carta,
hagan el favor de completar

éste modelo y describan
detalladamente la condición o
condiciones de su dificultad:

**Dificultades y
Valor estimado en dólares:**

☐ Cuentas médicas en exceso

\$

☐ Pérdidas accidentales o a consecuencia de desastres

\$

☐ Gastos de domicilio

\$

☐ Gastos en educación especializada para niños

\$

Hay casos en que niños al
cuidado de una familia
califican para obtener leche

gratis y comidas gratis o a
precios reducidos; no importa
el ingreso de la familia. Si
ustedes tienen tales niños en

su casa y desean que partici-
pen en las comidas y la leche,
☐ favor de indicarlo aquí.

Por éste medio, certifico que
toda la información arriba
mencionada es verdadera y
correcta. Es mi entendimiento
que ésta información se hace

en relación con el recibo de
fondos. Federales, que la
administración de la escuela
puede por causa a razón justa
verificar dicha información y
que toda falsa representación

rendida deliberadamente
puede conducir a que el
solicitante sea ejecutado bajo
los estatutos penales del
Estado o del Gobierno Federal.

Firma (jefe de la familia)

Fecha

**Para Uso Solamente
por La Escuela:**

☐ Approved Free

Reason for denial

☐ Approved Reduced

Date

☐ Denied

Approving Official

Su aplicación para obtener
leche gratis y comidas gratis
o a precios reducidos para
sus niños ha sido:

y a ____ centavos para
desayuno.

Ustedes pueden apelar esta
decisión si no esta a su
satisfacción. En tal caso,
sirvanse escribir a

☐ Aprobada/comidas gratis
y leche gratis.

☐ Rehusado. Razon por la
cual:

☐ Aprobada/comidas a
precios reducidos a ____
centavos para almuerzo

o llame al

